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4 October 1963

MEMORANDUM FOR : Deputy Director (Science and Technology)

SUBJECT : OXCART Surfacing as It Relates to Mr. Robert Hotz, Editor of AVIATION WEEK

1. Despite the recent amount of high-level interest and concern on the knowledge possessed by Mr. Hotz, I do not think that anything has changed basically with regard to the level of knowledge possessed by Hotz and others like him in the aviation industry and the technical press fraternity. It just happens in this case that Hotz struck a sensitive nerve with General Carroll, D/NRO, and the DCI.

2. Rather than attempt to solve this matter by making a judgment on whether Hotz should be briefed at this point, I submit that we should begin attempting to decide how long we shall be able to protect the existence of OXCART and the current state of development not only in OXCART as a Project, but in the related configurations such as the R-12 and LRI.

3. We began discussing this question several years ago at which time we agreed that the AF-12 and the R-12 would have to remain under cover until at least 1 January 1964, which was the designed operational readiness date for OXCART, and the time by which we expected to be operational. Slippages have made that an unrealistic date, I feel; yet for reasons of policy, we have not yet altered it. We shall shortly be coming up with what I believe will be more realistic dates for a limited operational readiness and a revamped design OR date for the full OXCART capability. I am not prepared to say until later this month what it will be with any accuracy, but it may well be that the full operational readiness date will coincide pretty much with the delivery of the first of the six prototype aircraft for the R-12 Program, namely August of 1964.

NRO and USAF review(s) completed.

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4. I have already discussed with Colonel Geary in Air Force, and he with D/NRO, the possibility that we should plan on moving the first and second R-12's [redacted] for preliminary flight tests as opposed to surfacing them at Edwards. Kelly Johnson tells me that by doing this we could in all probability preserve the security until the end of calendar 1964. I am not prepared to suggest at this time that Hotz and other like him should be brough in under the tent, although I think they might well be cleared passively so that we could brief them overnight in the event of a sudden emergency brought on by a crash or something similar. We have been trying for months now to coordinate within DOD a position on an OXCART contingency plan which would stand us in good stead in the event of such an emergency, but we have been totally unable to get the subject properly aired through existing D/NRO machinery and through this with the Ad Hoc Cover Committee.

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5. We have been remarkable lucky in containing the OXCART this long. It is now three years plus since the first contract was signed with Kelly and there has been no formal leak. I realize we cannot contain the existence of the Air Force versions of the OXCART forever, but I do not see us stampeded into a premature surfacing without full consideration of the consequences both to the Agency and the Air Force, as well as to the present Administration which could be helped or seriously hindered if it is not handled properly, this being the eve of an election year. I think the Director should be advised that we are moving to frame a position on this as rapidly as possible, but in view of the sensitivity of all concerned, we would prefer not to reach our conclusions prematurely. In the meantime, however, I vote no on an immediate briefing of Hotz with the understanding that we should clear him passively.

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JAMES A. CUNNINGHAM, JR.
Acting Assistant Director
(Special Activities)

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